THE Hartford-shire Wonder, OR, Strange News from WARE

Being an Exact and true Relation of one *Jane Stretton* the Daughter of *Thomas Stretton*, of *Ware* in the County of *Hartford*, who hath been visited in a strange kind of manner by extraordinary and unusual fits, her abstaining from sustenance for the space of 9 Months, being haunted by Imps or Devils in the form of several Creatures here described the Parties adjudged of all by whom she was thus tormented and the occasion thereof with many other remarkable things taken from her own mouth and confirmed by many credible witnesses.

Job 1. v: 12.

And the Lord said unto Satan; behold all that he hath is in thy power, onely upon himself put not forth thy hand.

LONDON, Printed for *John Clark* at the *Bible* and *Harp* in *West-Smith-Field* near the Hospital Gate. 1669.

BIBLIOTHECA NATIONALIS

Courteous Reader,

I *Here present thee with a true modern story, which deserves to be inserted in a Chronicle rather then a penny Pamphlet being for the strangeness thereof not easily paralel'd; and were there not sufficient persons both in* Ware *and* London, *to justifie the truth thereof, might not gain credence though with some of an easie belief; but this thing being so well known I shall not insert any more testimonies here for the truth thereof, it being a labour as superfluous as he who took on him to praise* Hercules *whom no man dispraised. By this learn not to trust to those who pretend themselves Cunning men, Wizards or Astrologers, for all knowledge that*

is not from God is vain, wicked and hurtful, not onely to them that practice them, but also to those who being in trouble think to gain remedy by them; and remember that saying in the second of Kings cap. 1. v. 3. Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to inquire of *Baal-zebub* the god of *Ekron. Read remember, and avoid, which is the hearty wish of*

Thy faithful Moniter

M. Y.

THE Hartford-ſhire VVonder, OR

Strnge news from Ware.

SOme there be which entitle this the Iron age, becauſe of the ſtubbornneſs, and Iron hearted inhabitants that live therein; though I think it may as properly be termed the age of Wonders, conſidering two ſo eminent wonders which have lately hapned in the ſame. *viz.* That of the *Darby-ſhire Maid*, *Martha Taylor*, her faſting from all ſuſtenance for ſo long a ſpace, and this other of one *Jane Streator*, a maid of *Ware* in *Hartford-ſhire*, no leſs ſtrange and wonderful then the other, of which I am now about to relate.

This *Jane Stretton* was born at *Ware* in *Hartford-ſhire* aforeſaid, about the year of our Lord 1649. Being the Daughter of one *Thomas Stretton* a Wheel-right, who

with his wife are now living in the ſame Town. It ſo chanced that this *Thomas Stretton* loſt a Bible, which he valued (as every one ſhould doe the word of God) at a high price, and being very deſirous to have it again, it ſo fortuned that he did light into the company with one of his Neighbors who was ſuch a one as the Country people term a Cunning man, Wizard, or Fortune-teller. ſuch of whom the Lord ſaith in *Deutrinomy* Chap. 18. v. 10. 11. 12. *There ſhall not be found among you any one that uſeth devination, or an obſerver of times, or an Inchanter, or a Witch, or a Charmer, or a Conſulter with familiar ſpirits, or a Wizard, or a Negromancer, ; for all that doth theſe things are an abomination unto the Lord.* This perſon thus qualified was by *Streaton* deſired (if his art could reach ſo far) to tell him who it was that had his Bible? to which the other anſwered, that he could if he would: *Stretton* as bluntly replying again, that then he muſt be either a Witch or a Devil, ſeeing he could neither write nor read, theſe words ſtruck home, and a guilty conſcience being wounded will ſoon ran-

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chor, his heart is inflamed with the fire of revenge, but for the present he covers it with the ashes of dissimulation; he will not vend his malice at present, but like the *Ram* goes backward to return with the greater force; love and friend ship is written on sand which every puff of wind will blow away, but malice and envy is engraven in Marble or Adamant, time cannot obliterate or wear it out; and that which is worst, our Natures are such that one discourtesie shall wash away all the friendship that twenty benefits have implanted in our hearts.

But Malice sleeps not though it may wink, within a moneth after the wife of this Fortune-teller or Cunning-man which you please to terme him, comes to *Strettons*, desireing of this his daughter *Jane*, (who was newly come out of service) a pot of Drink: she being ignorant of what had passed betwixt her father and the other, willingly does it: Innocency dreads no danger, the child will play with the Bee for his gaudy coat, and mistrusts not his sting, soon after she is taken with violent rageing fits, which torment her grevious ly, yet

no mistrust of the cause of her malady, from what was too much afterwards apparent to to be seen: the Devil is a sly theif, and though he keeps his servants poor, yet he indues them with a plentiful stock of malice revenge, and dissimulation.

About a week after the same woman comes again and desires a pin of her, (by small means great mischeifs may be perpetrated) the silly maid mistrusting no mischeif, as not intending any, bestows one on her, when on a sudden her fits waxed far more violent then before; her body swells like a bladder pust up with wind ready to burst, all her members were distorted, and as it were put in the wrack: going to the next Meighbours, her head being intoxicated by the violency of her fits, she falls down against the door and beats it open, lying in a deplored spectacle of pitty, tormented any one would have thought enough for the satisfaction of the most inveterate malice.

But her misery ends not here, the squib is not run out to the end of the rope, where the Devil has an inch given him, he will take

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and ell, and as it is ſaid of Rebels, that when they draw their ſword, they muſt throw away their ſcabboard, ſo wicked perſons think that when they once begin they muſt make an end, their malice is like an inperfect book, it hath no *Fits* to it, they will willingly looſe one eye to put out both of their Neighbors. Her fits increaſed more violently, the laſt time the woeman ſaw this Maid ſhe ſounded away, and lay for the time as it were deprived of life, after the recovery of this ſounding fit, her ſenſes being in part recovered, yet her body ſtill remained as infirme as before; In ſix months ſpace ſhe neither eat any thing, nor avoided any excrements, for where the cauſe is taken away, the effect muſt needs ceaſe. But ſuch a wonder as this could not be confined, it was ſtrait ſpread abroad, and as we Engliſh are like the *Athenians* deſirous to hear of News, and to be aſcertained of what we hear, ſo the report of this aſtrange wonder drawes a great concourſe of people to the houſe, to the diſturbance not only of the maid, but alſo of *Thomas Streton* himſelf: wherefore to purchaſe a quietneſs to

himſelf

himself, he removed her to the house of one *John Wood* a Neighbour of his, yet not without such provision but that she had continual attendants both night and day by her Friends and Relations, who now at last began to distrust that her sickness proceeded from more then an ordinary cause.

Several days and nights was she thus watched, it being a miracle in Nature that a corporall body should continue without the assistance of food, when at last to the spectators plain view, there appeared the resemblance of Flax and Hair to fall down upon a white sheet that was laid over her bed, which they narrowly taking notice of, and perceiving her tongue to hang or loll out of her Mouth, upon a nearer view found the perfect resemblance of Flax, Hair, and Thred points to be on the same; which being by them removed, there presently proceeded from her mouth two flames in resemblance of fire, the one of a red colour, the other blew, and soon after, in some short distance of time, eleven pins; in several crooked forms and shapes, some bowed one ways some another.

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The report of these more strange accidents soon flew about, not onely all over the Town of *Ware*, but to the adjacent Villages, and more remote Towns, so that people came in multitudes to see her, some out of pitty, to help and comfort her, others out of curiosity to be ascertain'd of the truth of these relations, and some who were diffident of any such thing as Witchcraft or conjurations, who being fully satisfied in the truth of what is here set down, went home fully convinced of their errours.

In all this her extream tortures, she complained continually of an exceeding pain in her back more then the other parts of her body, as if she were continually slasned with a kife or had her flesh cut and mangled, and the people about her with setting her up in her bed to give her some ease, found a naked knife there, no body knowing how or which ways it should come thither.

Several things were applyed unto her, and as it is usual for the Tooth-Ach every one hath a particular Medicine, so in that concourse of people there could not but be many advisers, some to this thing, and some

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to that, but none that appeared profitable to the Maid, who was more violently tortured still then before; It now being apparent that her distemper proceeded from the malice of the Devils Instruments, on whose body God had permitted them to exercise their envy, her tongue lolling out of her mouth in so sad and lamentable a manner as struck an astonishment in all the beholders; and to convince them that it was done by Witchcraft and such Diabolical means, they could see the Devil or his Imps, or what it was we cannot determine, but sometimes it was in the shape of a Toad, at other times it resembled a Frog, and at other times again in the form of a Mouse, for as the Devil can transform himself into an Angel of light, to deceive people, so he can turn himself into any beastly shape to torment them.

And now that her Distemper was so evidently known, and that the Neighbours were informed of the preceeding passages betwixt this Inchanter, Fortune-teller, cunning-man, or what you will term him, his Wife, and the Maid; they adjudged those 2 parties the absolute cause of the Maids, per-

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plexity, resolved by violence to fetch them before her, in the interim she being in a violent fit, some of the some from her mouth was put into the fire, there to be burnt, the parties that were gone at that time lighting on the vvoman and telling her their resolution to carry her before the maid, she made them this answer, *that if they had not come, she could not have staged any longer from her.*

Three several times was this Flax and Hair with the likeness of a Thred point seen upon her, before very credible witnesses who are ready to attest the same upon their Oaths.

The time that she began to be thus strangely tortured is *Michaelmas* last was twelve month, during which time if we seriously consider every particular we shall hardly find her paralel, *viz.* her extraordinary tortures, by swellings, somenings, and other pains, her abstinency from all food, for about the space of nine moneths, save only some few liquid meats impossible in humane reason to have preserved life, her being haunted with Frogs, Toads, Mice and the like, or worse instru-

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ments in their likeness, the knife found in her bed, none knowing by what means it came thither, & her pains as it were answerable to that instrument; all which being put together and throughly considered, we may admire that such weak earthly bodies of ours should ever undergoe such unspeakable misery, we being like glass apt to be broken with the least knock of misery; like straw or stuble which the least fire of affliction consumes away, a hair being sufficient to choak us, a little stopping of our breath to stifle us, that if we will make comparisons of instability there is nothing more fit to resemble it then the life of man.

At present she takes nothing but surrups and such like liquid ingredients, being in much pain and misery, yet it is hoped by the blessing of God and the endeavours of those under whom she is in cure, that at last she may be eased of her misery, and let none look aversly upon her in this respect, though she can say with the Prophet, *Behold and consider if any griefs be like unto mine*, seeing *David* saith, *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delive-*

reth them out of all. And when God had permitted *Satan* to afflict the righteous *Job*, giving him power over all his substance, goods, chattels and body, yet still there was a reservation, *only* (said he) *thou shalt not touch his life.*

Whom God loveth he chasteneth, that having Hell here, they may have there heaven hereafter, for better it is with poor *Lazarus*, to lye at the doors, having the dogs licking our sores, then with the rich Glutton to fare deliciously every day, and afterwards to be tormented in hell.

Some are of that belief that stories of witchcraft are but idle *Chymeras*, but we know that no part of Scripture was spoken in vain, and one place thereof saith, *thou shalt not suffer a Witch to live*, those who are so, I wish them grace to repent, and get out of their damnable estate, and should admonish all persons whatsoever not upon any loss or disaster to go to these South-sayers, Wizards, or cunning-men, for as the Scripture saith in one place, *Cursed be the Image*, and *the Image maker*, so I say there can no blessing be to those who are either Wi-

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zards, or go to them for help and Councel.

For the truth of this Relation I might (if there were occasion for it) insert the names of several Eminent Persons both in *Ware* and *London*, who freely offered to attest it, but the thing being so near hand and obvious to our eyes, I count it needless, for who will cry out the Sun shines, it being therefore a vain thing to go to prove that which we suppose none will deny, desiring thee to accept of my pains herein, I take my leave.

FINIS.